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The Cleveland Museum of Art
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POUSSIN PAINTING ACQUIRED BY THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

The Cleveland Museum of Art has acquired a painting by Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) entitled Holy Family on the Steps. Painted in the late 1640s, it is 28½ inches high by 41 inches wide and was acquired from a private source. Christ, Mary, and Joseph are shown with John the Baptist and his mother Elizabeth seated on a flight of steps. A solemn monumentality is created by the painting's geometric placement of figures in an imposing architectural setting. A low viewpoint makes the figures and restrained classical architecture even more majestic.

Poussin is generally regarded as the greatest French painter of the seventeenth century. He was born in Normandy to poor bourgeois parents. He studied painting in Paris and in 1624 went to Rome, where he worked for nearly all the rest of his life. He did return to Paris in 1640 but by 1642 was back in Rome. Poussin believed that art should deal only with noble human actions and that the artist should seek the universal and avoid the trivial. His work shows a striking interest in, knowledge, and appreciation of classical art. His paintings from the years between 1643 and 1653 are viewed as his finest achievements and the purest explication of the post-Renaissance classical spirit. Holy Family on the Steps is a major work from this period in which Poussin perfected his mature classic style.

The painting will go on view May 1 in gallery 20. It will be shown for a brief period before being relined and cleaned in the Museum's conservation laboratory.

For additional information, please contact the Public Relations Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.